

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 0942

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PLAB, PINR, IZ
SUBJECT: IRAQI LABOR FEDERATION MEETS

1. IRAQI GENERAL FEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS HELD
FIFTH NATIONAL CONFERENCE APRIL 26-30. CONFERENCE
ACCENTED POLITICAL NATURE OF GFTU. FOLLOWING RESOLUTIONS
ARE ILLUSTRATIVE: "TO CONVEY TO THE UNIONIST ORGANIZATIONS
OF THE WORLD THE THOUGHTS OF THE BAATH PARTY AND THE
CHARACTERISTICS OF ITS EXPERIMENTS AND THEORETICAL
PROCEDURES," "TO CONDEMN PLANS FOR A MIDDLE EAST
SETTLEMENT," AND "TO EXPOSE THE PRACTICES OF THE SYRIAN
REGIME."

2. ATTENTION OF LOCAL OBSERVERS FOCUSED ON ELECTION
OF A NEW EXECUTIVE BUREAU FOR THE GFTU. THE PREVIOUS
CHAIRMAN, RCC MEMBER MUHAMMAD AYESH, WAS DEEMED INELIGIBLE
FOR RE-ELECTION DUE TO HIS RECENT APPOINTMENT AS
MINISTER OF INDUSTRY. THE NEW EXECUTIVE BUREAU CHAIRMAN,
MU'AYAD ABDULLA, IS A BAATH PARTY AND LABOR OFFICIAL
FROM MOSUL.

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3. PRIOR TO CONVENING GFTU CONFERENCE, THERE WAS
EXTENSIVE PERIOD OF CAMPAIGNING IN MARCH WHEN
ELECTIONS WERE HELD FOR LOCAL LABOR UNITS. "PROGRESSIVE
LIST," WHICH IN PAST HAD CAREFUL BALANCE BETWEEN
BAATH PARTY MEMBERS AND IRAQI COMMUNISTS, WAS ALMOST
ENTIRELY BAATHI. PREDICTABLY, ALL CANDIDATES ON
PROGRESSIVE LIST WON. IRAQI COMMUNIST DAILY REFUSED

TO PUBLISH RESULTS WHILE OTHER PAPERS TRUMPETED THEM AS GREAT VICTORY FOR SOCIALISM. SOVIET EMBOFF REMARKED ACIDLY THAT BAATH SIMPLY UNWILLING TO SHARE POWER WITH ANY OTHER PARTY.

4. COMMENT: IRAQI LABOR FEDERATION PLAYS A MODEST ECONOMIC ROLE BUT A MAJOR POLITICAL ONE. IT IS THOUGHT THAT MUHAMMAD AYESH ACCEPTED INDUSTRY MINISTER JOB WITH RELUCTANCE, KNOWING THAT HE WOULD HAVE TO GIVE UP HIS POWER BASE IN LABOR MOVEMENT. CAREFUL STAGING OF GFTU CONFERENCE AND THE BACKROOM BARGAINING WHICH PROBABLY PRECEDED ELECTIONS TO EXECUTIVE BUREAU MAY REFLECT A STRUGGLE FOR POWER WITHIN THE BAATH PARTY. IT IS LESS SPECULATIVE TO NOTE THAT CONFERENCE AND LABOR ELECTION WHICH TOOK PLACE EARLIER WERE DEVICES TO INSURE THAT ORGANIZED LABOR DOES NOT OFFER A CHALLENGE TO REGIME. PECK

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